

6 June 1960

ER 60-4263/a
U.S.A.L.

Brigadier General A. J. Goodpaster
Staff Secretary
The White House

Dear General Goodpaster:

Mr. Dulles has asked me to thank you
for sending him the article by Mr. William L.
White in the Emporia Gazette.

Bill White is an old friend of Mr. Dulles
and had sent him a copy of his article which
Mr. Dulles acknowledged with thanks.

Sincerely,

SHENF0

Assistant to the Director

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(EXECUTIVE REGISTRY FILE *White House*)

W.L.White in The Emporia Gazette

CALCULATED RISK

Just how silly was our Central Intelligence Agency to have sent an intelligence plane over the Soviet Union on the eve of a summit conference? The more the facts come out, the less silly the CIA looks, if indeed it was silly at all.

For the U-2 turns out to have been a wonderful tool for getting information, which was most precious to us and to the cause of world peace. Those flights, we now learn, have been going on since 1960 without a mishap, for the U-2 was built to cruise and take pictures at an altitude of about 14 miles, far out of hearing of the ground, and far above the range of any Soviet anti-aircraft artillery or rockets, which burst harmlessly several miles beneath her.

For this reason during those four years we had got no protests from the Russians, who were clearly anxious to conceal from their own people the fact that these flights, which they could not prevent, were going on.

Let us now do some second guessing. No matter how perfect a tool the U-2 seemed to be, there is always chance of some failure, mechanical or human, which would put a pilot and a plane in Soviet hands. Why take this risk — even though it seemed slight — by sending over a plane on the eve of a conference?

The answer here is that at just such a time, accurate information was most powerfully wanted.

Here is our President about to sit down with the world leaders to discuss disarmament. If there had been some dramatic change in what the Russians were up to on the ground, our Central Intelligence Agency would have been criminally negligent if it failed to get and report that change, so that our President could have this fresh and vital knowledge, even though we ran some slight risk in getting it.

So, taking this small calculated risk because the stakes were high, that U-2 took off on May 1st. Just what happened 14 miles in the air over Sverdlovsk? We have the Russian version, or rather, two conflicting ones. The truth we may never know, but we may theorize.

One theory could be that, in recent months, the Russians finally have been able to develop an anti-aircraft rocket capable of flying to 14 miles and striking accurately. So on this May 1st they used it for the first time, knocking down that U-2.

Against this theory is the fact that had the Russians been able to get a rocket to that height, triggered by time-set, the plane probably would have been blown to tiny bits, scattered over many square miles, and the pilot could have had no chance to bail out.

Even had he had a chance to jump clear and had his chute opened at 14 miles he would have small chance of surviving a fall through those many miles of atmosphere.

failure. Then he would be forced to bring his plane down to 14,000 in order to breathe, at which level he would be within easy range of Russian flak, which could have crippled his plane so that he had to hit the deck, leaving his plane out of control, to hit the deck ~~near~~ distance away.

A number of the known facts fit this theory. They are, that the pilot seems to have survived almost unscratched; able to stand up and be photographed in his flying suit directly after the crash, and to be interviewed. Secondly, the plane was not blown to bits and scattered, as would have happened after a direct hit by a rocket at 14 miles, but — (again from photographs) — seems no more badly twisted up than is the average civilian plane which flies blind into a mountain side.

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But back, now, to the Central Intelligence Agency headed by Allen Dulles, a Truman appointee who has the coolest head in the business. Was that million-to-one risk of oxygen failure worth taking on the eve of the summit conference? A thousand times yes, and particularly on the eve of that conference. For in our fast-changing world, stale information has little value. A known fact a year old is worthless. A two-month-old fact has some value, but not much. But a two-week-old fact can be priceless. And it was the clear duty of Allen Dulles to take any million-to-one calculated risk in order to supply to our President, at that coming conference, just such fresh facts, if they existed. Had the chances been even 10 to one, it would have been worth taking.

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So we lost. But let us make sure that, in the hysteria of this moment, we do not also lose in Mr. Allen Dulles one of the coolest, shrewdest and most useful public servants this country has ever had.—W. L. W.

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THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

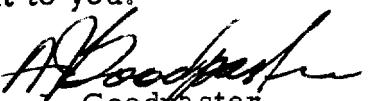
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60-4263

June 1, 1960

MEMORANDUM FOR

The Honorable Allen Dulles
Director of Central Intelligence

General Cutler sent in the attached
article to the President, and asked
that a copy be sent to you.


A. J. Goodpaster
Brigadier General, USA
Staff Secretary